

WBBM Radio, July 30, 2007

U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk meets Monday with mayors and village presidents of 10 lakefront communities from Wilmette to Waukegan to discuss their next steps in their battle with oil giant BP and its Whiting refinery expansion plans.

"We want a strong voice from the suburbs to move against the BP plan," he said.

Kirk wants that voice to be loud and clear at a scheduled Aug. 9 Indiana Dept. of Environmental Management hearing on the Whiting expansion plan.

While BP has its wastewater permit, IDEM must still consider the air pollution variances it needs under the federal Clean Air Act.

Kirk said that this time, he wants to make sure the mayors are ready and can form a united front.

"We'll have a bigger impact on the Clean Air hearing," he said. "Our mayors here in Illinois can reach out to other mayors in Wisconsin and Michigan to make sure BP knows that they just have to back down."

IDEM issued the wastewater permit June 21, over the objections of a handful of Indiana residents.

Kirk also will preview some of the legislation he proposes to file in September if BP refuses to alter its plans. BP America Chairman and President Robert Malone is scheduled to meet with a bipartisan delegation of Illinois and Michigan congressmen Sept. 1, and promised to conduct a review of the project before then.

The meeting begins at 10:30 a.m. at Kirk's Northbrook district office.

Representatives are expected to be on hand from Wilmette, Kenilworth, Highland Park, Highwood, Glencoe, Lake Forest, Lake Bluff, North Chicago and Waukegan. Also on hand are expected to be senior officials from the U.S. and Illinois Environmental Protection Agencies.

The mayors' task force Kirk is setting up is not expected to be a one-issue coalition. Kirk said he expects it to address other pollution issues in the Great Lakes, including raw sewage discharges from Milwaukee and Detroit, as well as the asbestos contamination left behind by Johns-Manville Corp. at Illinois Beach State Park.